

Descriptions of Ānvīkṣikī in the Texts of Classical India and the Nature of Analytic Philosophy

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Abstract:

The author enters an already old dispute, that is whether a counterpart of the notion of *philosophy* could be encountered in the traditional India, upholds the view that the term *ānvīkṣikī* (lit. “investigation”) was nearest to it and traces its meaning along the texts on dharma, politics, poetics and philosophy properly. Two main avenues to the understanding of philosophy’s vocations in India have been paved in the *Mānavadharmasāstra*, along with the commentaries thereon and by Kamandakī, the author of *the Nītisāra* (as the knowledge of Ātman) and in the *Arthaśāstra* and the Nyāya texts composed by Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara (as a metascience helping the other branches of knowledge bear their fruits). Therefore philosophy in India as well was regarded as the duality of ideological and methodological constituents, while the emphasis on analytic practice in the definitions of *ānvīkṣikī* (Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy as a practice is also referred to in this context) paves a good promise for comparative philosophy.

Keywords: philosophical self-reflexion, defining, controversy, the literature on dharma, the literature on politics, Nyāya, philosophical practice, analytic philosophizing.

In spite of such facts that Indian philosophizing is as old as in Greece and the texts in Indian language which could be regarded as philosophical completely or at least partly can be counted in five-digit numbers,¹ the very notion corresponding to *philosophy* is so comparatively a rare bird in the texts of Indian culture that some even eminent Western scholars have doubted whether we have there any real counterpart of it at all. So Paul Hacker, a great authority in Advaita-Vedānta and in Indian spiritual culture in general, while acknowledging that the term *ānvīkṣikī* is near to it, came to conclusion that it means (bearing in mind its contexts in the *Arthaśāstra* in the first place) rather some “examining science” (*nachprüfende Wissenschaft*) suitable for any field of knowledge and that in spite of doubtless presence of philosophy in Indian culture and even a notion of it, a corresponding term has nevertheless been lacking there [6, pp. 80-81]. His follower and critic Wilhelm Halbfass, the author of an epoch-making book on Indo-Western cultural encounters and dialogue, doubted his predecessor’s point that we can have a notion of something without having a

term for it and put into question whether we have a univocal term for philosophy in Western culture as well, and substituted the issue of “an Indian counterpart” by another one, i.e., of the importance of Indological studies for Western philosophical self-reflection [6, pp. 80-81]. Both named Indologists, nevertheless, devoted very careful job to disclosing the conceptual and historical contexts of the related terms. As to Indian Indologists, they revealed, at least in the second half of the twentieth century, a scarce interest to these texts and contexts but comparatively numerous among them of them took more interest in pretended apologetic perspectives of the issue (see below).

My point is that in order to identify *philosophy* in Indian culture one has to take as premises not intuitions, preconceived suppositions and still less wishes but some objective criteria. I believe as well that such criteria should necessarily involve the possibility or, contrary, impossibility to detect such a concept and, correspondingly, a term which could both cover the specific characteristic of the phenomenon under discussion and serve as an umbrella (not in our eyes but in Indian text-sources) for those schools which fall into the category of philosophical ones with the same rights as all Western schools identified as philosophical (without embarking on an endless talk what philosophy as such is or should be).

The only term fit for it is, according to the texts in my disposal, the same *ānvīkṣikī* (lit. “investigation”), highlighted in this capacity already by such a luminary in Indology as Hermann Jacobi more than centenary ago and endorsed slightly later by Moritz Winternitz (see: [9] and [24]), the main case for it being the monumental treatise on politics and state government *Arthaśāstra* where it is defined as exploratory activity and the class of such units as the schools of Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Lokāyāta univocally philosophical ones. Later on one found that the same covering of both a specific investigating activity and philosophical schools was testified also in the *Kāvyaīmāṃsā* by Rājasekhara, a very notorious treatise on poetics (see below).

On the other hand, some Indian historians of philosophy at least up to the end of the twentieth century vigorously promoted the term *darśana* (lit. ‘vision’) which should demonstrate spiritual advantage of Indian over Western philosophy as expressing direct vision of the spiritual truth independent of rational instruments of knowledge and, in accordance with it, the main (if not only) goal of Indian philosophizing, i.e. final liberation (*mokṣa*).² But this identification of philosophy in India contradicts directly to the very texts of classical India. These texts, be they Hindu, Buddhist or Jain, use this term in quite different sense, that is as the designation of philosophical schools (and by no means methods of their work) in doxographic texts collecting their tenets (sometimes with their justifications and refutations).³ But its allegiance with mystical vision inasmuch as it expresses the semantics of vision is not more evident than in the cases of such English terms as “views”, “points of views”, “viewpoints”, etc. And as to the method of philosophy as the latter has been identified in India, we’ll see that it was regarded in description of “philosophy” just as the opposite to “mystical vision”. Therefore, to understand semantic connotations of *philosophy* in India would be mostly profitable to center on the first term under discussion in different texts. These texts belonged to various fundamental classes of Indian literature, not to applied ones, like “compendiums” discussed just above.

The most ancient text where *ānvīkṣikī* was mentioned (at least for contemporary knowledge) was the *Gautama-dharmasūtra* composed most likely about the 2nd century B.C. It is stated there that a king should master (only) two disciplines, i.e. the Three Vedas (*trayī*) and just one under discussion (XI.3). The term occurs in the later teachings of dharma as well, in more extensive royal curricula, that is of the versified Dharma-śāstras. So in the *Mānavadharmasāstra* (circa the 1st century A.D.) already four disciplines are testified, i.e. the Three Vedas and *ānvīkṣikī* are supplemented by the science of government (*daṇḍanīti*) and science of economics (*vārttā*). It is essential that *ānvīkṣikī* is disclosed also concerning its subject, as *ātmavidyā* – «the science of Ātman», i.e. almost metaphysics (VII.43). The same quadrangle of disciplines which had become already canonical was reproduced in the *Rājadharmā*, i.e. one of two didactical sections of the *Mahābhārata* (XII. 59.33) which cannot be dated more exactly than from the first half of the 1st millennium C.E. The same “date” could be attributed also to such an authoritative text of the *smṛti*

class as the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* wherein the same four disciplines of royal competence are also listed (I.311).

Medhātithi (circa 9th – 10th centuries C.E.), the most authoritative commentator of the *Mānavadharmasāstra* interpretes *ānvīkṣikī* in two formats, i.e. according to its subject and its method. In the first regard, he treats it as the science of Ātman, with the explication that “the inner Ātman” is meant in the commented verse and that the profit from this science for a king consists in its usefulness for any Ātman (therefore of a king himself) and therefore commends it for pacification of the excitements of mind. In the second regard, philosophy is treated as the science of right use of reasoning (*tarkavidyā*), and here two interesting clarifications are offered. On one hand, this science is recommended for study in order to repel onslaughts of the Buddhists, materialists and other impious persons who use quasi-reasonings for alienating “weak ones” from the faith, on the second hand it is needful for a king to be on a firm ground in negotiations with ambassadors of his royal neighbors. Medhātithi was followed also by a later interpreter, Sarvajñanārāyaṇa, who clarifies that “the science of right reasoning” should be taken from such philosophers as the Naiyayikas and Sāṅkhyas (not from the Buddhists and other nāstikas,⁴ as is suggested). But other later commentators, Kūlluka, Rāghavānanda and Rāmacandra leave an impression that they suggest (against the quadrangle of the royal sciences embraced by the compiler of the *Mānavadharmasāstra* itself) divorce *ānvīkṣikī* and *ātmavidyā* as two different sciences. Kūlluka treated the second science already as “the science of Brahman” and Rāghavānanda clarifies that *ānvīkṣikī* deals with justifications of some and refutations of other propositions while *ātmavidyā* with such statements as Ātman is unborn and therefore eternal and that removing sadness implied by that should be regarded wholesome for the soul.⁵

Rāghavānanda’s logic slips away from me. Indeed, what is the difference between justification of the statement that Ātman is eternal and, correspondingly, rejection that it is ephemeral (as the Cārvākas and Buddhists promulgated it from different presuppositions), on one hand, and dealing with Ātman’s eternity on the other, if it was not only stated but repeatedly endorsed by his time by Indian philosophers that to establish one tenet is the same as to repudiate one opposing to it? But it is true that such detachments of what was the same led Paul Hacker to scepticism in relation to *ānvīkṣikī* as the counterpart of *philosophy* (see above).

The second class of literature has been already touched above when we substantiated the view that it was just the place occupied by *ānvīkṣikī* in the science of politics that made it the nearest counterpart of *philosophy* for some authoritative Indologists. The compiler (or editor) of the *Arthasāstra*, dating probably from the 1st – 3rd centuries A.D.⁶ appeals to *ānvīkṣikī* in many contexts in the first chapter of his great code of the political science (I.2). A very exquisite panorama of authoritative (even if semi-historical) views on the very body of the quadrangle of the royal disciplines was displayed there. The Mānava school rejects *ānvīkṣikī* as a separate science by incorporating it into Three Vedas. Some Bṛhaspati school rejects both it and the Three Vedas by maintaining that only politics and economy deserve the title of sciences. The school of Uśanas asserts that there is only one necessary knowledge, i.e. the science of government. But the compiler (or editor) of the text posits his own view (while identifying it with that of Kauṭīlya) that all the four sciences are both independent and necessary for all other knowledges and human prosperity. As to *ānvīkṣikī*, he not only makes it the designation of the class to which three philosophical schools belong but describes its method as “investigating by means of arguments” (*hetubhir ānvīkṣamāṇā*), and still more, reveals such a secularism (which in the Dharmic literature could have been quite unreal) as to name it (in one verse, most likely composed by him but cited as a piece of a lore) the light of all knowledge (the Three Vedas being included) and the foundation of all successful activity and human prosperity: “Light to all kind of knowledge, easy means to accomplish all kinds of acts and receptacle of all kinds of virtues, is the science of Ānvīkṣikī ever held to be”⁷ By what reason? Because the light is such a thing that helps see all other things in their truth, i.e. what profit and damage are in economy, correct and incorrect means in politics and even dharma and adharma in the scope of the Three Vedas.⁸

But Kamandaki in the *Nītisāra* (circa 5th – 6th centuries A.D.), a follower of the author of the *Arthaśāstra*, who managed to expound its subjects in twenty versified chapters, corroborates, while receiving royal sciences again, the definition of the *Mānavadharmasāstra* to the result that *ānvīkṣikī* is the science of Ātman, with such a clarification that its profit for anyone (a king, certainly, is being included) consists in the fact that investigation of the nature of enjoyment and suffering offered by it delivers its student from both of them (II.7, 11). But he does not overdo as his predecessor did (who made philosophy the light even for the Three Vedas, see above) by leaving dharma and adharma wholly on the care of the Vedas.

It is not surprising that the place occupied by philosophy in the traditional quadrangle of royal sciences was comprehended in philosophical texts themselves, i.e. in the texts of the Nyāya school. Vātsyāyana, the founder of the multistorey exegetical building of the school who commented its sūtras in the *Nyāya-bhāṣya* (4th – 5th centuries A.D.) tried to realize the correlation between *ānvīkṣikī* and *ātmavidyā* from a quite new view-point. For him to “*ātmavidyāmātram*”, i.e. nothing more than the knowledge of Ātman in such texts as the Upaniṣads, sixteen “scientific” categorial topics (beginning with the sources of knowledge and ending by the points of defeat in a dispute) are as it were added in the science of Nyāya. And, one could read up Vātsyāyana to the end, just these 16 topics constitute that medieval science of reasoning (*tarkavidyā*) whereon the late interpreters of the *Mānavadharmasāstra* beginning with Medhātithi will write (see above). But Vātsyāyana inserts the Nyāya philosophy into *ānvīkṣikī* as well, by their identification by means of intended play of assonances. Namely, inference basing itself on perception and tradition is after-knowledge (*ānvīkṣā*), but after-knowledge is also an examination of what was known by means of perception and tradition before, and what is realized by means of this examination is just *ānvīkṣikī* which is the knowledge of Nyāya (*nyāyavidyā*) or, in the other words, the science of Nyāya (*nyāyāśāstra*). Therefore, *ānvīkṣikī* which is “the light of all sciences” (the verse from the *Arthaśāstra* is cited – see above) is just that science whose distinguishing features are sixteen categorial topics expounded in the Nyāya-sūtras (I.1.1). And this science is implemented, according to Vātsyāyana, by means of three intellectual operations, i.e. the nomination of objects of knowledge (*uddeśa*), their definition (*lakṣaṇa*) and critical examination of definitions (*parīkṣā*), viz. inspection whether definiens corresponds to definiendum, and he also adds classification (*vibhāga*) in another fragment of his text (I.1. 2-3) [22, pp. 3, 4, 17].

Vātsyāyana’s ideas were approved by his interpreter. Uddyotakara in the *Nyāyavārttika* (7th century A.D.) comments not only his predecessor but also that verse from the *Arthaśāstra* wherein *ānvīkṣikī* as the science par excellence was glorified (see above). He clarifies that it is “the light to all kinds of knowledge” inasmuch as all other sciences can deal with their matters by means of the sources of knowledge and other categorial topics which, in turn, are dealt with only by *ānvīkṣikī*. To the objection of an imaginative opponent as to why other sciences cannot do with these sources of knowledge themselves, Uddyotakara responds that it is because it is not their business (*anadhikārāt*) and therefore they are dependent on the science under discussion. And also concerning it as “the means to accomplish all kinds of acts and receptacle of all kinds of virtues” (the same verse from the *Arthaśāstra*) the point is the same: it is because of the capability and vocation of *ānvīkṣikī* to serve as the assistant to all other sciences for their fruiting (*upakāra*) [21, p. 21].

Medhātithi’s contemporary Jayanta Bhaṭṭa in the monumental *Nyāyamañjarī* (circa 9th century A.D.) while having endorsed that there are just four sciences in the world also devoted himself (like Vātsyāyana) to pastime with etymologization, very estimated in Indian traditional scholarship. The word *ānvīkṣikī* came from the verb √ īkṣ + anu, but derivation according to this view contains the very essence of any thing, which in this case is after-vision or examination of the knowledge acquired from other sources, viz. perception and inference [12, p. 4]. Therefore Jayanta follows Vātsyāyana almost in everything with only such a difference that the second source of knowledge has been changed and *ānvīkṣikī* becomes something like after-inferential knowledge.

As to “after-knowledge” of *ānvīkṣikī* itself in the *Kāvyaīmāṃsā* by Rājaśekhara (10th century), it is identified here as the polemical activity of two camps, viz. the deniers of the Vedic

authority (the Buddhists, Jainas and Cārvākas) and its defenders (the Sāṅkhya, Naiyayikas, Vaiśeṣikas). Moreover, it is clarified that polemics is being accomplished in three modes as canonized in the *Nyāyasūtras* – debate for truth (vāda), wrangling (jalpa) and cavilling (vitaṇḍa) (II.2) [16, pp. 18-19]. But here an attempt is made to combine different calculations of the sciences (śāstras), and while venerating the quadrangle of the “royal sciences” (suggesting however with an older authority named Yāyāvārīya that the science of poetics could be added to them as the fifth one) Rājaśekhara acknowledges also eighteen disciplines of “the sacerdotal scheme”⁹ wherein *ānvīkṣikī* is also inserted by him in spite of the fact that usually the place of philosophy had been usually occupied according to this scheme by *nyāyavistāra*, “the wealth of nyāya”.¹⁰

All the said reveals that even if quantitatively self-reflection of philosophy in India has been more than moderate if compared with European tradition¹¹, its small ‘extent’ helped it be more qualitatively centered. Two avenues for understanding the vocation of philosophy had been paved: in the *Mānavadharmasāstra* as the science of Ātman and in the *Arthaśāstra* as a kind of meta-science, the idea enthusiastically developed by the philosophers of Nyāya, and in accordance with these two vocations philosophy was considered later in India as the dual unity of the ideological and methodological constituents.

Most clearly the methodological dimension of philosophy has been clarified by the great philosopher Vātsyāyana who differentiated “mere knowledge of Ātman” in the manner of the Upaniṣads and the same knowledge in the context of professional investigation supplied with the special categorial topics. Under the angle of comparative philosophy one cannot avoid almost exact parallels here with Arthur Schopenhauer for whom “ordinary sciences” can also bear their fruits via corresponding applied philosophies (like philosophy of botany, philosophy of zoology etc.) which in turn draw upon the proper Philosophy which investigates the principle of sufficient reason while they only use it [18, pp. 155-156]. But what is still much more important, Indian understanding of philosophy from the *Arthaśāstra* and culminating with the *Nyāya-bhāṣya* and *Nyāya-vārttika* is nearest to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s vision wherein it is a *practice* and by no means a set of doctrines.¹² A difference could be identified by the fact that in India this practice was cogitated not as monologic clarification of notions but as the dialogical, i.e. controversial work on propositions and, correspondingly, concepts as has been highlighted “visually” by Rājaśekhara but presupposed also in the related contexts of commentaries on the *Mānavadharmasāstra* and in the very practice of Indian actual philosophizing. One can mention only such things that ancient Indian syllogism itself included “superfluous members” as compared with Aristotelean inference, and not because of “inductive mentality” ascribed sometimes to Indian mind in the West but for such a reason that polemics of a proponent with an opponent (usually an imaginative one) left its vestiges in the classical five-membered syllogism of Nyāya and was directly incorporated in the seven-membered and ten-membered ones in ancient Jainism and Sāṅkhya.¹³

And this justifies, I believe, my earlier idea that analytic philosophizing has been by no means specifically Western but intercultural undertaking which could be described as philosophical classicism with clear-cut parallels in both the axial time in all the three breeding grounds of philosophy in the world and full blossomed scholasticism of the medieval and post-medieval ages in European and Indian traditions.¹⁴ There are only two reasons for overlooking these parallels, one of them being residual hypocritical Eurocentrism and another one, and much more important, quite sincere lack of understanding that analytic philosophy is just a practice and not a set of doctrines wherein Wittgenstein was also sure (see above).¹⁵

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Notes

1. One can make sure in it while looking at least in the last edition of the most notorious bibliography of Indian texts (by no means complete as the whole literature in all Indian languages was not referred to there): [14].
2. See, e.g.: [8, pp. 182-183; 2, p. 2; 3, p. 102; 19, p. 13; 17, p. 22] to name only a few publications.
3. One can name here the titles of most notorious texts of this genre, popular in the schools of Jainism and particularly Advaita-Vedānta, i.e. the *Śaddarśanasamuccaya* (7-8th centuries A.D.) by the Jaina Haribhadra lately twice at least commented, *Sarvadarśanasiddhāntasaṅgraha* of surely Advaitic authorship and falsely ascribed to Śāṅkara (as numerous scriptures of the school), *Sarvamataṣaṅgraha* of the same school and again without recognized authorship and, at last, the most detailed and renowned text of the class, the *Sarvadarśanasāṅgraha* composed by the Advaitin Mādhava Viidyāraṇya (14th century A.D.) wherein 15 schools were reviewed (if one regards the last chapter on Advaita itself an authentic one). The text was used by Western Indologists of the later half of 19th century as the main textbook on Indian philosophy wherein one could find the essentials of every school without much job. It occurred only recently that some Indologists argued that not Viidyāraṇya but some Cannibhaṭṭa, the preceptor of both Viidyāraṇya and his brother Sāyaṇa, was the author of it judging by numerous textual coincidences in the *Sarvadarśanasāṅgraha* and his other works. Almost exhaustive description of the contexts of the term *darśana* in the related literature has been presented in [7, pp. 296-309].
4. Philosophers denying the authority of the Vedas and related texts along with other corner-stones of Brāhmanism were meant under this designation
5. See: [11, pp. 774-775]. Mutual correlations of these two notions in the commentaries under discussion were carefully dealt with in [15, p. 52] and [7, pp. 322-323]. Among Indian scholars Dharmendra Nath Shastri is to be mentioned who did not see any evidence against the view that the science of Ātman was included in ānvīkṣikī (see: [13, p. 21]).
6. Kauṭīlya-Viṣṇugupta, the famous minister of the Maurian emperor Candragupta living in the end of 4th century B.C., could not have been the author (against the univocal traditional lore) inasmuch at least as the person under this name is mentioned many times in the text along with other authorities not to mention the fact that this text mirrors realities of many historical epochs.
7. The classical translation of the text by R. Shamasastri is cited here: [1, p. 6]. In the original: Pradīpaḥ sarvavidyānām upāyaḥ sarvakarmānām// Āsrayaḥ sarvadharmānām śaśvādānvīkṣikī matā.
8. Just before the verse cited it was stated that the same science “keeps the minds steady and firm in wheel and woe alike and bestows excellence of foresight, speech and action” (Ibid.). So it is true that philosophy in India was regarded a means for the right way of life but not as “the direct vision of reality” (see above), in contrary, as a science of reasoning by arguments.
9. This distinction of two schemes of sciences, very successful in my opinion, was formulated in [6, pp. 66-69] and developed later in [15, pp. 31-39].
10. It goes without saying that my survey, however detailed in a sense, was confined mostly to the evidences on the traditional disciplines of knowledge in classical Sanskrit literature. It does not claim on the coverage of all sources, such as, e.g., Śaivite treatises or Purāṇic texts, nor it took account of vernacular Indian literatures, but I believe that the very infinity of these scriptures could be at least a small excuse for me.
11. Although not all cases of the use of the term under discussion in all commentaries and subcommentaries (including very later ones) to the named texts were mentioned above, they don’t contribute, I believe, anything substantial to what has already been stated. In contrast, different facets of understanding φιλοσοφία only in Plato’s texts could constitute the contents of a book (and numerous investigations in the field have been already published), in Greek and Roman on the whole of an extensive one and in the whole Western tradition up to the end of the 20th century could not be packed in one volume. To make sure of it one can look only in the article *Philosophie* (Bd.7) in many volume *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* under the guidance of Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer and Gottfried Gabriel (1971-2007).
12. Compare the famous “sūtra” in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (the very structure of this text reminds strikingly that of the basic texts of Indian darśanas) 4.112: “Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrines but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. Philosophy does not result in “philosophical propositions,” but rather in the clarification of propositions. Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries.”
13. All of them had a very ancient lineage in the debates of experts in Vedic rituals and texts in the first half of the 1st millennium B.C. and in the debates of the first Indian dialecticians in the epoch of the Buddha (the very middle of the same millennium).
14. See: [20]. Then I was almost a solitary in this attitude but not one-aloner. For example, L. Cohen avowed that analytic philosophers are those who are interested in issues connected with reason and reasoning and therefore they constitute the historical line in Western philosophy beginning with Socrates, and D. Follesdale included Aristotle in their ranks. As to ānvīkṣikī, it was at least such an authority as Alan Warder who, while referring to the definition of Rājāśekhara (see above) characterized it as “philosophy and more accurately as what is sometimes called analytical philosophy” with clarification that in the first place “it is an area of controversy”. See: [4, p.49; 23, pp. 7, 9]. But some features of the same practice can be discerned also with ancient Chinese disputants from the School of Names (with

Gongsun Long at the head) even if it was suppressed by the authoritative rulers, and only later Chinese culture got acquainted with analytic methods by means of translations of Indian Buddhist texts dealing with it.

15. It is true that some cases of incorporating Indian philosophy (of the very late period) in this format take place now, see, e.g., [5]. But its analytic features had revealed themselves already one and half millennia before Navya-Nyāya for already contemporaries of the Buddha practiced perpetual critical analysis of propositions (sometimes of definitions as well) in everlasting disputes (using very willingly such polemical expedients as trilemma and especially quadrilemma – *catuṣkoṭi*) for which some kings and queens (Mallikā from Kosala was one of them) erected even special lodgings called *kutūhalasālā*. On this intensive analytic activity and using manifold means of investigation-in-polemics one could be referred to a masterpiece on the topic which is by no means outdated even today, that is [10].